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Strengthening of the United Nations system

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Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields

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Sectoral policy questions: business and development

Sustainable development and international economic cooperation: women in development; human resources development; international migration and development, including the question of the convening of a United Nations conference on international migration and development to address migration issues

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Environment and sustainable development: implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21; International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction; Convention on Biological Diversity; protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind

Globalization and interdependence

Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

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Advancement of women

Elimination of racism and racial discrimination

Human rights questions: implementation of human rights instruments; human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Review of the Statute of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal

Letter dated 21 June 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the Cartagena de Indias Declaration Rio Group 2000: Commitment for the Millennium, issued by the Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group at the conclusion of the summit meeting held in the city of Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, on 15 and 16 June 2000 (see annex).

On behalf of the States members of the Rio Group, I should be grateful if you could arrange for the text of the above-mentioned Declaration to be issued as a document of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly under agenda items 49 (b), 59, 60, 61, 76, 80, 82, 97 (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), 98 (b), 99 (c), (d), (e), 100 (a), (b), (c), (d), 104, 106, 108, 109, 114, 116 (a), (b) and 161 and circulated to delegations.

(*Signed*) Alfonso **Valdivieso**
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
Pro tempore secretariat of the Rio Group

Introductory note

The Heads of State and Government, meeting in the city of Cartagena de Indias, on the occasion of the fourteenth summit of Heads of State and Government of the Permanent Mechanism for Consultation and Concerted Political Action — Rio Group — hereby adopt the "Cartagena de Indias Declaration: Commitment for the Millennium".

The Heads of State and Government have decided to present this document as the region's contribution to the agenda of the Summit and shall agree on the manner in which the positions contained in the Declaration shall be jointly expressed in the various working groups.

Cartagena de Indias, 14 June 2000

Cartagena de Indias Declaration

Rio Group 2000: Commitment for the Millennium

1. We, the Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group, which has now been expanded to include Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, have gathered in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, on 15 and 16 June 2000 as representatives of our peoples to continue the process of consultations and high-level concertation of political action to promote the ideals of the maintenance of peace, strengthening of democracy and promotion of sustainable development in our region and, in particular, to contribute to the preparation of the Millennium Summit to be convened by the United Nations next September.

2. The Millennium Summit affords us an historic opportunity to promote concrete initiatives for building an international system that offers greater justice, security and fairness for all, through a package of measures based on the values of cooperation and international solidarity. We recognize that the main responsibility for strengthening the United Nations lies with its Members and we are confident that the results of the Millennium Summit will make a tangible contribution to the achievement of the Organization's aims and the strengthening of its capacity to respond to the growing challenges and needs of our peoples and nations.

3. We begin the new century committed to the consolidation and strengthening of representative democracy as a system of government and to the promotion of its values and defence of its institutions. This commitment guides the actions of our Governments in both their domestic and foreign policies. In this connection, we reiterate the importance of strengthening the rule of law and political pluralism, as well as of the responsible and ethical discharge of public duties. We also stress the need to promote the effective and responsible participation of citizens and civil organizations in our nations' institutional life, as an increasingly necessary contribution to the debate on matters of public interest.

4. The phenomenon of globalization has brought with it challenges and opportunities for the countries of the region. In recent years, the level of trade, financial flows and economic integration has soared dramatically. However, we still face the major challenges of reducing economic and social inequalities and ensuring that the benefits of globalization are fully shared by all the peoples of the region. We must seek creative ways of participating more actively in the process of globalization by taking advantage of new technologies, strengthening our cultural identity and projecting it to the rest of the world.

5. We reaffirm our commitment to respect the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law and, in that connection, wish to place on record the following views on issues that are of prime importance to our region.

Commitment to the human dimension of development

6. We are of the view that economic growth should be used to reduce economic inequality in our nations and the high incidence of poverty that currently affects broad sectors of our societies. To this end, we intend to allocate adequate resources to social expenditure, and especially to the development of human capital.

7. In order to meet social needs and to ensure equality of opportunities, we must increase the rate of sustainable economic growth and raise the productivity of our economies, within a favourable external environment. We recognize the need to fund at one and the same time social protection networks and investments in human capital and infrastructure. In order to do so, higher levels of international cooperation are needed.

8. We consider the expansion of international trade flows to be essential and reject protectionist measures by the industrialized countries, particularly in the agricultural sector, which are not in keeping with the trade liberalization policy being pursued by the countries of our region. Access to markets must therefore be guaranteed and the domestic subsidies and subventions granted by the developed countries eliminated so that Latin America could increase the level of its exports, which would in turn help to create jobs and improve social conditions.

9. We also appeal for a just and lasting solution to the problem of the external indebtedness of our economies, particularly those of the highly indebted countries of our region, so that debt would cease to be an obstacle to economic and social development and the most pressing needs of their populations could be met.

10. We consider universal access to basic education and a substantial improvement in its quality to be the pillars of our commitment to social development and a fundamental basis for productive human development and democracy. We also consider it important to strengthen occupational training programmes and to promote the training of human resources in the use of advanced scientific and technological resources. This task, together with the creation of more opportunities for productive employment, will be the basis for increased social and cultural participation by our young people.

Commitment to multilateralism

11. We are of the view that multilateralism promotes greater symmetry in international relations and contributes to transparency and to the development of equitable rules of the game, which would permit us to tackle global problems in a more timely manner and with greater effectiveness. We therefore intend to strengthen the multilateral institutions and existing mechanisms for consultation and concerted political action as our contribution to the development of a more democratic and participatory international system.

12. We consider broad and democratic participation in multilateral institutions to be an important part of an equitable and balanced approach to global problems. We also consider it essential to strengthen regional forums and to develop mechanisms for cooperation between them and the global multilateral organizations, while respecting their respective areas of competence.

Priority issues on the global agenda

13. As the world's first densely populated region to be free of nuclear weapons, with the signing of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, we maintain that nuclear disarmament is the responsibility of all States, primarily those which possess nuclear weapons, and that it is incumbent on the international community, represented in the United Nations, to take specific steps to promote the non-proliferation and the elimination of nuclear weapons. We express our satisfaction with the outcome of the last Review

Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which contained an unequivocal commitment to the complete elimination of such weapons, and we reaffirm our support for the initiative on a New Agenda for Disarmament.

14. In our hemispheres, we have developed such instruments as the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and other Related Materials, and we have undertaken to promote international agreement on this issue in the framework of the negotiations of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and to build on those activities on the occasion of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be held in the year 2001.

15. We urge all States which have not yet done so to ratify as soon as possible the Ottawa Convention to ensure the complete eradication of anti-personnel mines and we renew our commitment to the rehabilitation of victims and to the clearance of mines in our region, as well as to the goal of transforming our hemisphere into a zone free of anti-personnel mines. We agree that the use of excessively cruel or inhuman weapons, particularly those which are home-made, should be prohibited in conflicts of any kind.

16. We agree that there should be a broad approach to the issue of human rights which covers civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and which is based on respect for the dignity of persons and protection of their fundamental rights. To that end, we intend to strengthen regional institutions that promote and protect human rights and to promote a culture of human rights in the hemisphere.

17. We reaffirm that the approach to the question of human rights should be based on the principles of non-selectivity, impartiality and objectivity and that human rights issues should be dealt with in an atmosphere of cooperation and with the strictest respect for the norms and principles of international law.

18. We intend to contribute to the progressive development of the international law on the criminal responsibility of the individual for the commission of certain international crimes, as provided for in the Statute of the International Criminal Court.

19. We are committed to fully respect the principles and norms of international humanitarian law and we appeal to all parties in any type of armed conflict to refrain from involving the civilian population, particularly children. We consider unacceptable any action taken to address situations of emergency that is outside of the framework of the Charter of the United Nations, in accordance with the principles governing humanitarian assistance agreed upon by the General Assembly.

20. We reject all forms of intolerance, including xenophobia, racism and racial discrimination, and we are committed to promoting and protecting the rights of the most vulnerable groups of society. In that regard, we attach great importance to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which is due to be convened in the year 2001.

21. We reaffirm that it is incumbent on the countries that send and receive migrants to strengthen their cooperation in the field of migration and to guarantee

the full enjoyment of their human rights, especially the right to life and to dignified, just and non-discriminatory treatment.

22. We reaffirm that full gender equality is an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and we therefore pledge to mainstream the gender perspective into the public policies of our Governments.

23. We have adopted a comprehensive approach to the global problem of drugs, based on the principle of shared responsibility, and we believe that a determined effort on the part of the international community is needed to make this approach truly global, as the international community agreed in 1998 at the twentieth special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to the global problem of drugs.

24. In this connection, we have adopted at the regional level a multilateral evaluation mechanism, of an intergovernmental nature, which is an objective and balanced instrument that takes into account the special characteristics of the global problem of drugs in the region. We now propose a period of review to permit an in-depth analysis of the background and results and we invite the United Nations to keep in mind the aforementioned mechanism with a view to the future elaboration of similar arrangements at a global level.

25. We subscribe to the Inter-American Convention against Corruption and are working towards its implementation and towards the elaboration of a similar instrument within the framework of the United Nations. At the same time, we are intensifying our efforts to combat the laundering of money that represents the proceeds of various crimes.

26. We reaffirm our support for the principles of sustainable development agreed upon in Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, as well as in the Santa Cruz de la Sierra Plan of Action, including, in particular, the principle of shared but differentiated responsibility, and we strongly urge the developed countries to meet their targets for the reduction of greenhouse gases by ratifying the Kyoto Protocol by the year 2002. In this connection, we attach particular importance to the Sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in The Hague in November 2000, and stress the need for early regulation of the implementation mechanisms under the Kyoto Protocol, particularly the clean development mechanism.

27. We reaffirm the urgent need to mainstream environmentally friendly technologies and to develop sustainable production systems. In order to achieve this objective, we shall continue to work towards the strengthening of our scientific and technological capacities and shall promote specific international cooperation initiatives, including initiatives to facilitate the transfer of technology.

28. We recognize that the expansion of trade flows and conservation of the environment are complementary objectives that contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and we therefore reject the adoption of unilateral measures which, under the pretext of concern for the environment, are transformed into unjustified restrictions on trade. We also reject the adoption of arbitrary and unilateral measures which are inconsistent with the multilateral trading system and based on labour-related criteria that restrict access by our products to other markets.

Reform of the international financial system

29. Because of the extraordinary expansion of the international financial markets, which is characterized by the proliferation of its agents and instruments and by the volatility of short-term capital flows, efforts at the national, regional and global levels should focus on the prevention of external crises.

30. At the national level, we agree on the importance of promoting responsible macroeconomic policies based on solid public finances, prudent monetary policies and suitable exchange regimes, in order to take advantage of the benefits of an increasingly integrated international economy. This will permit the achievement of stable long-term growth, thereby reducing the vulnerability of the countries of the region and helping to prevent both external imbalances and fluctuations in production and employment.

31. The changes that have occurred in the global financial system in recent years make it necessary to reform the institutions responsible for the regulation of the system. At the same time, we propose that these institutions should make additional efforts to disseminate and promote in all countries the application of internationally accepted standards in such areas as banking and financial supervision and regulation, as the main pillars of the stability of international financial markets.

32. One of the key objectives of the strengthening of the international financial architecture should be the creation of a framework that is conducive to the stability of financial and exchange markets, and within which, in extreme situations, adequate financial assistance is provided to countries that are in the process of adjusting their balance of payments situation.

33. We consider that the management of critical situations depends on the availability and timely provision of international liquidity to prevent the spread of financial crises and reduce their negative impact. International financial institutions should improve their credit facilities through transparent, agreed upon and non-discriminatory mechanisms that help countries in difficulty to return to solvency and regain access to international financial markets. We also urge the private financial sector to play an active and constructive role in the prevention and resolution of crises.

34. We propose to strengthen the international financial system and at the same time further develop regional and subregional financial institutions by taking advantage of their comparative advantages, ensuring more effective coordination of their activities and avoiding duplication of functions.

35. We stress the importance of the high-level meeting on finance for development to be convened by the United Nations in 2001, which will bring together the international community and the main international financial and trade organizations. This forum provides an excellent opportunity to adopt the measures necessary to continue to promote the reform and strengthening of the international financial system.

36. In addition to having the capacity to prevent and to deal effectively with external crises, the new international financial system should provide a suitable framework for access to long-term resources and technical assistance for economic and social development as well as provide financing for social and infrastructural projects. This is necessary in order to reduce poverty, raise the level of well-being of

our societies and strengthen support policies and social security networks, with a view to substantially improving living conditions in our region.